

PRICE 5 CENTS.

NEWPORT NEWS, VA., THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 1898.

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BATTLESHIPS AFLOAT.

Kearsarge and Kentucky Successfully Launched
This Morning.

IMMENSE CROWD PRESENT.

Distinguished Visitors from Washington, Louisville, Lexington
Frankfort Richmond and Other Places.

The first-class battleships Kearsarge and Kentucky were successfully launched this morning at the yard of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, in the presence of a number of distinguished spectators.

The Kearsarge, named after the famous ship of that name, which distinguished herself in the civil war by sinking the Alabama off Charleston, France, was launched first, in accordance with the plan formulated some weeks ago by the officers of the company. Mrs. Herbert Winslow, wife of Lieutenant Commander Winslow, U. S. N., christened the Kearsarge, which glided down the ways and out into the river as intended, and instantly as a young duck took to water.

When the Kearsarge had been safely moored alongside of one of the lower shiplifts, the crowd, consisting of a number of company and the thousands of spectators turned their attention to the Kentucky, on the other side of the big crane.

As soon as necessary arrangements could be made the Kentucky started on her way, and Miss Christine Bradley, daughter of Governor William O. Bradley, of Kentucky, took a bottle of pure spring water against the ship's prow, christening the vessel in the customary manner.

This launch, too, was a grand success in every way, and, like her sister ship, the Kentucky rode the waves in a manner which reflected credit on her builders.

TIRE CROWDS ARRIVE.

Never before in its brief history as a launch of this Newport News company, had such a throng of visitors as today. The tide continued to surge last night by the hundreds, and the boats and boarding houses were crowded. Today the railroad, electric road and steamers brought a moving mass of humanity, all having the same destination in view.

The Norfolk and Washington steamers arrived here about 8:30 o'clock, bringing a number of navy department officials, officers and Senators and Representatives, accompanied by their wives. The Chesapeake and Ohio railroad special excursion to the city from Cincinnati, Richmond and Washington, and these brought several thousand visitors.

The Newport News, Hampton and Old Point Electric Railway Company put on every available car, and from an early hour they have been carrying every few minutes loaded down with passengers. Many of these visitors came from Hampton, and others came from Old Point.

As early as 8 o'clock, crowds of antiquating men, women and children commenced to wend their way to the shipyard in the hope of securing desirable points of vantage. Throughout the entire morning, Washington avenue has been literally crowded with a moving mass of humanity, all having the same destination in view.

While the office was open to some visitors, the bulk of the immense crowd gained entrance to the shipyard through the southern gate. Once inside, the anxious spectators moved to the ways on which the battleships were being launched, awaiting the hour of their baptism in the waters of the historic James river. These ways are situated in the north end of the yard, practically the same place where La Grande Duchesse, the Crole and other hands, are products of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company were built and launched. Not far from the shipyard ways on which these two big ships proudly courted christening at the hands of their fair sponsors, lies the battleship line, now nearly ready for launching, and destined to be the queen of the American navy.

While waiting the arrival of the christening party and listening to the music of the band, the thousands of employees of the yard busied themselves making preparations for the greatest launching event in the history of the world, the thousands of eager spectators cast admiring glances up at the big hulls freshly painted and gaily decorated with bunting and the flags of the nation. Sister ships, though they were there were many in the large numbers of people who ventured to make comparisons as to the lines and symmetry of the Kearsarge and Kentucky. The lines came in for a large share of admiration, and there were animated discussions as to the fighting powers of each of the three ships which, naval

experts say, will place the Newport News shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company at the head of the list of the world's battleship builders.

CHRISTENING PARTY COMES.

At a moment when men, women and children of the city of Newport News, the State of Virginia and the great American nation were intent only on the gay, festive scene before them, cheers from the vicinity of the company's flower-hedged approach of the christening party. Immediately all eyes turned in that direction and people ventured for favorable points from which they could catch glimpses of the ladies on whom had been conferred the christening honors, the distinguished gentlemen who have figured so conspicuously of late in diplomatic affairs in Washington, and the officials of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, who plainly showed the pride which they felt in the launching of the new battleships.

The party proceeded to one of the boats which had been erected at the bow of the two steel hulls, and which had been carefully built with red, white and blue.

All vessels are constructed with their bows pointing toward so that they will strike the water first when released from their building and float out upon the river. The ladies, and a greater degree of safety, permit the position for constructing the launching boats at the bows of the Kentucky and Kearsarge.

The Kearsarge having been selected to leave the ways first, the christening party proceeded to the boat at the head of No. 18, as this ship has been christened in honor of the great shipbuilder and the shipyard.

This is the critical moment in a launching. Only those who have actually witnessed similar events can conceive the import of the task and the intensity of the suspense. If the vessel has not sufficient stability in her light condition, she may lose her balance on the sliding ways, and, before her launch, she may sink. The constructor in charge must, therefore, be sure to make sure that his calculations are correct.

Up to this time, the ship rested easily on the keel blocks, and, as she was being lowered, she had been held in an upright position by the shores along her sides. Then followed the simple process of transferring her weight from those keel blocks to the ways that were to carry the ship into the water. Long wedges of white-oak were placed between the two ways throughout their entire length and at intervals of about every two feet.

WEDGES DRIVEN HOME.

At the word of command from Superintendent of Construction M. V. Donahy, the wedges were driven home with sharp resistant sounds, and the last wedge was securely placed and the big mass of steel was raised clear of the keel blocks in order to insure perfect success, this work was done simultaneously along the entire length of the ship. The next step was to remove the blocks, whereupon the ship tumbled to the ground and during of red paint were smeared upon the surface of the hull thus bared.

The sounds of the hammer slowly continued to be away to the distance and every eye was fixed upon the ship with expectation. The time for the launching of the ship was now at hand.

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ing from the neck, at the end of a long silk cord, which extended down from the forty deck of the battleship.

Suddenly from the depths below came the sound of the measured movement of a saw. Instantly, every voice was hushed as if by magic command and every eye was strained to catch the progress of the big steel blade as it pierced the sole piece. All of the preparations had been successfully completed to the satisfaction of the contractor, and the ship was now ready to be given to sever the large heavy oak planks which were the only hindrance left between the sliding and the ground ways.

While it only consumed a short time to accomplish this work, every second seemed in reality a minute.

MRS. WINSLOW LUCKY.

As the bottle of champagne was surrendered to the daintily gloved right hand of Mrs. Winslow, the silence was so evident that the fall of a pin on the platform could have been heard by those in its vicinity.

Mrs. Winslow pressed against the rail and gracefully passed the bottle in the air, impatiently awaiting the cracking noise which would announce the severing of the main planing.

"Buz, buz, buz, buz, buz."

As regularly as clock work, the cracked outburst came out its way.

And just there was a snap, the cracking of timber and the log had quivered for an instant on its bed.

THE KEARSARGE CHRISTENED.

Mrs. Winslow gathered herself up, and as the ship slowly started down the ways, she quickly broke the bottle against the keel block.

Simultaneously with a low against the impressions steel prow, the sponsor struck a breath of animation, ported of her life, and, with feminine sweetness, exclaimed:

"I christen thee—Kearsarge!"

The cracking of broken glass and the air of effervescent champagne came out to the crowd, and the ship was now on its way.

The party proceeded to one of the boats which had been erected at the bow of the two steel hulls, and which had been carefully built with red, white and blue.

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for the wishes of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of America, and she gave no evidence of any concern about the matter, assuming her position in the boat with perfect grace and calm of manner pleasing to observe.

MORE PREPARATIONS.

The Kearsarge had barely touched the water when the force of waves who had a few minutes previous been busy at work under her hull, suddenly rushed to No. 19 and joined the men who had already commenced to prepare the Kentucky for her launching. The same for each two battleships in the same hour was attended by a small amount of risk. While the laborers were working on the first ship, others had to start on the second in order that there should be no time delay. In the existing rush that followed the slightest accident might have resulted in the release of the Kentucky before the necessary preliminaries of her launch had been completed. Every precaution was taken, however, and as soon as the Kearsarge passed the James river, the workers commenced to drive in the wedges which were to do the better part of the work. In rapid succession, the wedges were struck the water, and the ship was now on its way.

A STRANGE CUSTOM.

As in the case of the first event, the ship and the sponsor were the central figures of the ceremony of peace and good-will, however, that in the second instance the size of the multitude concerned was much on the sister ship of the Kearsarge, as the young lady who had taken it upon herself to make history—Christine Bradley, in that case, was shortly to mother a nation that was scarcely known to the world and held up to ridicule when first suggested by the ladies of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Kentucky being the first battleship to be christened with water.

The ship christened with the Kentucky brand of this far-reaching organization was met by the national press and in convention at Buffalo, and in this instance the young lady, the daughter of a Governor, was to carry to commemoration an idea which had set every Jack tar in the United States on his feet, and which was to which bore the name of a great state.

CAUSE FOR SUSPICION.

To have a ship christened by a married lady was disappointing to the American sailor, but to have a ship christened with water was too much to suppress apprehensive suspicion. These and many others were the

thoughts uppermost in the minds of the thousands of spectators as they were gathered about the ways, waiting the christening of the ship. The ship was now on its way.

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body's tip part, and knew then that the christening would be a grand success.

ONLY PLAIN WATER.

The gaze of the guests and masses were directed to the spot on which the glass had been broken, but a spectacle far different from the first greeted their vision. There was no sparkling from the effervescent champagne, but a "fresh-washed" bath as it traveled its downward course.

The next minute the crowd forgot the strangeness of the spectacle and turned its attention to the moving battleship. Down the narrow toboggan of its huge support, the Kentucky sped with unwavering grace. The stern touched the water, causing a splash and subsequent excitement, and then the second addition within an hour to Uncle Sam's floating force entered the river with gentle swiftness.

AMERICAN EAGLE SCREAMED.

For the second time that day, the multitude of Americans and foreigners, looking on from the shore and from the river, saw the Kentucky, the American eagle, in a way that made the battleship famous, fifty per cent complete, fairly shake the water, and the crowd with delight for the day or which it would be baptized in the historic James with the complements and congratulations of the American people.

Another perfect launch to the credit of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company.

LIGHTLY RODE THE WAVES.

The mammoth steel shell rode the waves like a paper boat, and easily and lightly floated out to the channel. The comparatively tiny tug, swarmed around the new comer. The staunch little craft made fast to the ship's sides when she came to a full stop and away it commenced to tow her to another shipyard pier, close by that to which her sister ship was tied up.

As the great masses of people stood enthralled with admiration, it was plainly to be seen that they were dwelling chiefly on the marvelous success with which the shipbuilding company had constructed two ships that differed not in the slightest particular, and favored each other to the smallest detail.

WELL DESERVED SUCCESS.

The Kentucky was safely tied to her moorings, and the masses then realized that the two great events of the day were over. Well deserved success crowned the latest achievements of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company. Everybody is happy and satisfied, but from the relieved hearts of the builders and constructors who have carried the heaviest burden, there is a thankfulness for work without the usual inducement of a bonus.

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waters. The large dry dock was an object of interest to many, the immense traveling cranes attracted considerable attention and other wonderful apparatuses and structures about the yard came in for their share of public wonder.

DISSEMINATION OF SHIPS.

The last event of two ships of such magnitude being launched on the same day marks an era in the history of our new navy, while each ship in itself is the heaviest mass of the kind ever

Complement—Officers, seamen and marines 511.

The strictly novel characteristics of these ships is their exceedingly modern draft of water, but 25 feet when fully loaded, by which they may enter practically any harbor of importance along our coast lines, something denied to other nations. The offensive advantage possessed by this single feature cannot be overvalued.

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